

Message Text

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ACTION PM-07

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 SS-20 NSC-07 CIAE-00 DODE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-04 RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01 SPC-03

DRC-01 AF-10 /090 W

----- 054508

R 221200Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WSSHDC 687

INFO CINCPAC

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 0773

EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: MARR, CE

SUBJ: US NAVAL SHIP VISIT TO COLOMBO

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

REF COLOMBO 446

1. AS INDICATED IN EMBASSY'S REPORTING, GSL WAS QUITE DIS-
PLEASED WITH USG DECISION TO EXPAND DIEGO GARCIA ALTHOUGH IT
HANDLED ITS PUBLIC EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN WITH RESTRAINT.
ISSUE CONTINUES TO BE SENSITIVE AND REMAINS OBJECT OF GOVERN-
MENT AND PRESS ATTENTION. FOR EXAMPLE, FOUR STORIES HAVE BEEN
FRONT-PAGED MATERIAL FOR GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED AND OPPOSITION
PAPERS OVER PAST WEEK: RETIRED ADMIRAL LAVOCQUE'S CHARGE OF
US NAVY'S EXAGGERATION OF SOVIET THREAT TO INDIAN OCEAN; USE
OF ATOLL BY B-52'S; OPPOSITION OF SEVERAL US SENATORS TO DIEGO
UPGRADING AND INTRODUCTION KENNEDY RESOLUTION; AND LACK OF
BRITISH LABOUR GOVERNMENT DECISION ON PROJECT.

2. DESPITE CONTINUING SENSITIVITY, HOWEVER, WE THINK ENOUGH
TIME WILL HAVE ELAPSED AND SITUATION WILL HAVE CALMED DOWN
SUFFICIENTLY TO PLAN T HAVE A US NAVY SHIP COME INTO COLOMBO
AFTER FIRST WEEK OF MAY.

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3. WE BELIEVE IT IMPORTANT TO MAINTAIN RHYTHM OF SHIP VISITS AND, EXCEPT FOR DELICATE PERIODS SUCH AS WE HAVE BEEN PASSING THROUGH, WE THINK GSL DOES ALSO, BOTH FOR TANGIBLE EVIDENCE VISITS PROVIDE OF ITS POLICY OF KEEPING COLOMBO OPEN TO SHIPS OF ALL NATIONS AND FOR FOREIGN EXCHANGE INVOLVED. WE HAVE NOT HAD A VISIT SINCE USS WHIPPLE END OCT 73; WE HAD LOOKED FORWARD TO USS MISPILLION IN JAN, BUT THAT VISIT WAS CANCELLED BY CIN-PACFLT.

4. THERE HAVE BEEN THREE SEPARATE VISITS BY FOREIGN NAVAL SHIPS IN MARCH: TWO INDIAN SHIPS VISITED FEB 27 TO MARCH 2; THAI DESTROYER CALLED HERE MARCH 11 TO 14; AND FRENCH HELICOPTER CRUISER JEANNE D'ARC AND FRIGATE ARE NOW HERE (MARCH 19 TO 23).

5. WE THEREFORE SUGGEST VISIT BY SINGLE SHIP OF DESTROYER SIZE, EITHER TRANSITING INDIAN OCEAN OR FROM TASK FORCE ON STATION (WE WOULD, HOWEVER, NOT DRAW ATTENTION TO TASK FORCE LINK, IF ANY). WE WOULD RULE OUT NUCLEAR-POWERED VESSEL AT THIS TIME, ALTHOUGH, AS INDICATED REFTTEL, WE MIGHT WITH TO TRY TO BRING ONE IN HERE AT SOME POINT IN FUTURE.

6. WE MUST, OF COURSE, RESERVE OPTION TO CANCEL IF POLITICAL CLIMATE SHOULD DETERIORATE (FOR EXAMPLE IF DIEGO ISSUE BECAME CRITICAL AGAIN), WHICH WE DO NOT NOW ANTICIPATE.

7. IF DEPT CONCURS, WE RECOMMEND IT DISCUSS QUESTION WITH DOD WITH VIEW TO SCHEDULING SHIP VISIT HERE AS SET FORTH ABOVE. WE WOULD APPRECIATE RESPONSE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE IN ORDER HAVE DESIRED 30-DAY LEAD TIME FOR MAXIMUM PROGRAMMING BENEFIT. VANHOLLEN

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